

Senator John F. Kerry  
Statement for Coastal Zone Management Act Hearing  
May 6, 1999  
Subcommittee on Oceans and Fisheries

I want to thank Senator Snowe for holding this hearing and our panel of witnesses for joining us today. Our witnesses bring a range of expertise, including law, policy and science. I congratulate the Chair for assembling them.

In 1972 when the Congress first enacted the Coastal Zone Management Act it made a critical finding: "Important ecological, cultural, historic, and esthetic values in the coastal zone are being irretrievably damaged or lost."

As we consider reauthorizing the Act this Congress, I believe that we must measure CZMA's performance against this finding.

Have we stopped coastal damage and the loss of habitat? Have we reversed that trend and are we now restoring damaged habitat? For me, these questions are at the heart of today's hearing and the discussion we will have over the coming months.

First, I want to discuss what is at stake in our consideration of the Coastal Zone Management Act.

Coastal habitat is enormously valuable. It has ecological, cultural, historic and esthetic value, but it also has great economic value. Since we last reauthorized this Act in 1990, economic analysis has been done that I hope will inform our discussion today and help us understand just how valuable coastal areas are.

In 1997, economist Robert Constanza of the University of Maryland estimated the dollar value of coastal ecosystems worldwide at \$27 trillion.

His work was groundbreaking -- not because it argued that healthy ecosystems have economic value -- we all understood that. It was groundbreaking because it quantified that value in dollars and made it comparable to the other assets in the modern economy.

In his analysis, Dr. Constanza evaluated the "ecosystem services" that a healthy habitat provides. This includes the cleansing of air and water, regulation of watersheds, waste treatment, renewal of soil fertility and other environmental processes that we often take for granted.

He estimated that a single hectare of healthy wetlands provides almost \$15,000 in "services." In other words, it would cost nearly \$15,000 to purchase water filtration, flood control and all of the other services that a hectare of wetlands provides to a community.

In a single case in New York, he concluded that the City could spend \$1.5 billion to protect a watershed in the Catskills or spend 4 times that amount -- or \$6 billion -- on the construction of a water filtration plant that would replace the clean water provided by the healthy watershed.

Of course a great deal more than just clean water is at stake when we lose wetlands and other coastal areas.

In my state of Massachusetts, healthy fisheries depend on a healthy coast. Over the past fifteen years, we have faced a dramatic rise in shellfish bed closings, which have been caused by pollution from septic systems, farms and other runoff. When we are forced to close a shellfish bed, we are forced to put fishermen out of work.

The problem is not only the pollution, it is also that in Massachusetts, as in so many other states, development is encroaching on the coastal wetlands and overwhelming their ability to act as natural filters.

Protecting our coastal land means protecting the environment, biodiversity, open space and other societal benefits. It also means protecting an enormously valuable economic resource.

Second, I want to highlight the flexible, community-based and collaborative nature of the CZMA program. This is one of the best features of the CZMA, and I would like us to build on it.

Let me offer one example from Massachusetts: Cape Cod is facing significant environmental stress from increased development and runoff pollution. One of the challenges the state faces in solving this problem is monitoring coastal water quality. Environmental managers need good information to set a baseline for water quality and periodic measurements to evaluate progress.

Without this kind of information we cannot know what works and what doesn't work, and we cannot be certain we are using our limited resources wisely.

The CZMA program helped Massachusetts find a cost-effective and environmentally-effective solution to this problem.

There are 17 citizen groups that monitor water quality on Cape Cod and the Islands. Four years ago the staff at the Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve realized that if each of these groups used comparable methods and sought comparable data, a regional water quality monitoring system could be created.

The Reserve established a Volunteer Water Quality Coordinator position to provide training, communication, technical and funding assistance, and now these groups are working together and comparable data are available for the entire region.

This solution was possible because of the flexibility of the CZMA program. It allows states to set priorities, collaborate and use resources as efficiently as possible. I commend NOAA,

Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management and the staff at Waquoit Bay for this work.

Third, I want to discuss the financial support for the CZMA program.

I understand that the Clinton Administration is seeking to increase funding for the program to \$102 million as part of the President's Land Legacy Initiative. This would amount to a \$35.7 million increase over last year - which is just more than a 50 percent increase.

In general, I support the President's CZMA request. This Committee will, of course, craft its own proposal, and I look forward to working with Chairman Snowe in that process. But, I want to state that I strongly support the Administration request for additional funds. In my opinion, this program has been drastically underfunded.

I have examined the appropriations for CZMA since 1980. Although appropriation levels have varied, when you examine the base programs and account for inflation, you find that funding has generally stagnated. This current fiscal year CZMA has been better funded than it was in the past few years, but it is receiving far less than it did in 1980 and other years. This is not a criticism of past Congresses. Many programs have faced cuts because of tough fiscal times.

But nevertheless, at the same time that federal support for this coastal program has lagged, coastal population growth and its associated environmental stresses have continued to grow rapidly.

In 1960, about 95 million Americans lived on our coast. By 1980, that number climbed to almost 120 million. Today, there are 145 million Americans living on the coast. And projections show that by 2010, more than 159 million Americans will live on the coast.

We have not kept pace with our needs. More people, more development and more stress, have created a greater need for the CZMA programs. Unfortunately, we have provided less to our states and communities for coastal protection as the challenge has grown.

I want to add that I believe that this program will use additional funding efficiently and effectively, particularly in the effort to control nonpoint source pollution.

CZMA programs to control runoff have been drastically underfunded, in part because of resistance from states. We need to get funding to states that are ready to act and not hold the entire program hostage to states that are moving at a slower pace -- too slowly some have suggested. I hope that we tackle that issue in this reauthorization so that states that are ready to act will get the assistance they need.

In closing, I want to thank the Chair and witnesses again. I look forward to our discussion today and to working with the Committee in the coming months to reauthorize this important program.